

# First Nations Economic Partnership

## EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER PATHWAYS WORKING GROUP

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### PURPOSE

1. The purpose of the Working Group is to make policy recommendations to the First Nations Economic Partnership (Economic Partnership) around two immediate priority actions in the First Nations Economic Partnership Agreement (Partnership Agreement).
2. Specifically, designing funded programs to grow secure employment in the community-controlled sector, and establishing Economic Inclusion Zones.

#### CONTEXT

3. The First Nations Economic Partnership has agreed to explore six immediate priority actions, two of which are:
  - a) 34(d) Establishing Economic Inclusion Zones led by local First Nations organisations to develop and implement employment, education and training initiatives; identify and remove systemic policy and program barriers; deploy flexible and pooled funding; and strengthen economic participation in sectors such as the care economy, infrastructure and maintenance, cultural enterprises, and land and water management.
  - b) 34(e) Through new or existing measures, design funded programs to grow secure employment and career pathways for First Nations people in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector, supporting transitions from unemployment, achieving wage parity, creating new job streams, investing in professional development, and prioritising community-led service delivery in emerging local economies, including the care economy.
4. The Partners have agreed to establish a Working Group for this purpose.

#### SCOPE

5. In exploring both immediate priority policy actions and making policy recommendations to the First Nations Economic Partnership, the scope of the Working Group will reflect the scope of the Partnership as set out in clauses 10 to 13.
6. In particular, the Working Group will focus on the full range of policy levers available to the Commonwealth Government and develop initiatives that implement the four Priority Reforms of the Closing the Gap Agreement.

7. The Working Group will complement and support – but not duplicate – any other Working Groups established by the First Nations Economic Partnership and build on existing employment related initiatives and reforms underway across the Commonwealth.

#### **MEMBERSHIP**

8. The Working Group will be co-chaired by a nominated representative of the Coalition of Peaks and a nominated representative of the Commonwealth Government.
9. The Co-Chairs will jointly agree the membership of the Working Group. The Working Group membership may include:
  - a) representatives of Partners
  - b) Members
  - c) Experts.
10. The Co-Chairs will follow the mechanism agreed by the Partners when identifying and onboarding Members and Experts. An outline of the mechanism will be annexed to these Terms of Reference.
11. Each Founding Partner of the Economic Partnership may nominate a representative to participate.

#### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

12. All members of the Working Group are expected to identify and manage any actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest in accordance with clauses 66 to 69 of the Partnership Agreement.

#### **OPERATIONS AND DECISION MAKING**

13. The Working Group will operate in accordance with the purpose of the Economic Partnership as outlined in the Partnership Agreement.
14. The Working Group will be accountable to the Economic Partnership and operate under its strategic direction.
15. In contributing to the Working Group, members of the Working Group have the same roles and responsibilities as Partners as set out in clauses 27 to 29 of the Partnership Agreement.
16. Decisions of the Working Group will be made in accordance with clause 44 of the Partnership Agreement. That is, by consensus and consistent with Priority Reform One of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

#### **TIMELINE AND DELIVERABLES**

17. For priority 34(d), the Co-Chairs will deliver to the First Nations Economic Partnership an initial report within 12 months. The initial report will include implementation considerations, and recommendations for further progressing the priority.
18. For priority 34(e), the Co-Chairs will deliver to the First Nations Economic Partnership a policy proposal including initial costings and advice relating to implementation within six months (by May 2026).
19. Each report will outline the research, consultation and engagement undertaken by the Working Group.

## **RESEARCH, CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

20. The Co-Chairs will be responsible for facilitating research, consultation and engagement connected to the Working Group – ensuring alignment with the Partnership Agreement.
21. Activities may include conducting literature reviews and gathering evidence and statistics, reviewing the impact of existing programs and strategies, engaging with the community-controlled sector about their needs and priorities, and engaging with experts and other stakeholders such as state and territory governments, and the private and civil sectors.

## **SUB-COMMITTEES**

22. The Co-Chairs may establish sub-committees to consider specific matters related to the Working Group. Sub-committees may include Experts and Members.

## **TERM**

23. These Terms commence from 1 January 2026. The Working Group will be in operation for a period of 12 months from this date, and may be extended by agreement of the Partners.

## **REPORTING**

24. The Co-Chairs will be jointly responsible for updating the First Nations Economic Partnership about Working Group progress at Partnership meetings, or out-of-session as required.

## **RESOURCING**

25. The Working Group will be funded in accordance with clauses 74 to 78 of the Partnership Agreement.

## **SCHEDULE OF WORK**

26. A schedule for planned work under the Working Group will be developed by the Co-Chairs and annexed to these Terms of Reference.

## **AMENDMENT**

27. These Terms of Reference may be amended by agreement in writing of all Partners.